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FLOOR DEBATE

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under whose auspices the Nebraska Forest Service had been done declined to fund that at that point because it was not part of their core d...or core requirements at the university. They have to house the administration of that and also administer this program. This program is very vital because it does administer, among other things, the equipment that rural fire departments get for firefighting. And so this bill is in response to that. It is in the mainline...or is in LB 1089, and the funding is \$300,000 the first year, goes to \$590,000, I think, the second year. And it is to continue to fund this. It will still continue to be housed administratively in the University of Nebraska, but the funding will be earmarked from the General Fund budget direct to them so it is not vulnerable to the University of Nebraska cuts. And what this bill does, if we do not do this bill, the consequences are Nebraska could not meet the federal matching requirements and, therefore, the federal funds would be lost. For every dollar the state provides, the federal government matches with \$1. And, number two, which is really very critical to rural fire departments all over the state, the Forest Service could no longer provide reconditioned firefighting vehicles to rural fire districts. In addition, these reconditioned firefighting vehicles are on loan to the state, and this is the key. If there is no Forest Service, the vehicles would have to be returned. And I forgot to count, but I think it's 256 vehicles or 279, something like that, across the state are there because they are provided by the Forest Service and they have to be administered. And the issue is we have to have some form of administrative unit here in Nebraska to do this. Nebraska Forestry does that. So this bill, in addition to provide the money, which I said is already in LB 1089, the Forest Service also provides education and services covering all aspects of planting, protection, care and utilization of forest and trees resources. In addition, the Rural Fire Department Prevention and Control Program through its work with the volunteer fire districts helps provide fire protection to all rural lands, including rangeland. So this has four programs in this bill, LB 917. It provides rural forestry assistance providing on the ground technical assistance to landowners needing forest management help. Number two, it provides urban and community forestry, provides information and technical assistance to units of local government. Number